

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Kansas
COUNTY:	Mitchell
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME	
COMMON:	St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
AND/OR HISTORIC:	

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: 701 East Court Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Beloit		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: no. 1, Keith Sebelius	
STATE Kansas	CODE 67420	COUNTY: Mitchell	CODE 123

3. CLASSIFICATION				
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: Cyril J. Vogel, Bishop, Salina Diocese			
STREET AND NUMBER: 421 Country Club Road, Box 999			
CITY OR TOWN: Salina	STATE: Kansas	CODE 67401	CODE 20

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Register of Deeds			
STREET AND NUMBER: Mitchell County Courthouse			
CITY OR TOWN: Beloit	STATE: Kansas	CODE 67420	CODE 20

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic Sites Survey			
DATE OF SURVEY: June 6, 1971 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Kansas State Historical Society			
STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West 10th St.			
CITY OR TOWN: Topeka	STATE: Kansas	CODE 66612	CODE 20

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built of native limestone in the form of a Latin cross, St. John the Baptist Church combines Romanesque rounded arches with Gothic pointed arches and flying buttresses. The large well-proportioned structure faces south and measures 152 feet long, 74 feet wide at the front and 98 feet wide at the transept. There are two 90-foot towers at either side of the south front. The base of each measures 24 by 36 feet. Seating capacity of the church was 800.

The trim around the doors and window sills and the belt course between the foundation and the walls are Indiana stone. The other trim is limestone. The arched center entrance is supported by six granite pillars, three (each of a different color) on each side. The entrance is 13 feet in height and topped by a vestibule window eight by sixteen feet.

The sanctuary interior is built in three large arches and supported by eight huge Vermont granite pillars. Large windows in the main walls and smaller ones in the clerestory depict Biblical characters in brilliant color. Some windows are of stained glass but most were painted with a special process.

The 40-foot high vaulted ceiling is made entirely of stone taken from the 1878 church building which the present one replaced. St. John the Baptist Church is said to be one of a relatively few buildings in the United States with a stone ceiling throughout.

The main altar, placed in 1906, was imported from Italy and was built of Carrara marble and decorated with African marble. It was patterned after the memorial altar built in Rome by the French to honor Pope Leo XIII in the church of St. Joachim. On the front is a bronze cast of the Last Supper. The altar railing was added later. It was a marble-topped, carved wood affair. The side altars of simulated American marble were added in 1918.

In the sanctuary and transept are ten large frescoes and a smaller one, plus another smaller one under the choir loft near the entrance. They are the work of Professor Gonippo Raggi, K. C. S. G., a noted specialist of the day in ecclesiastical decorations. The sanctuary paintings depict the life of St. John the Baptist.

The appearance of the church structure has not been greatly changed over the years. Necessary repairs have been made and normal maintenance carried out. The roofing was replaced with slate in the 1940's; the front steps were replaced and railings added in the 1960's; and a ramp entrance was built at the west transept door in 1973. The white-painted interior walls have been periodically repainted.

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## 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian  
☐ 15th Century

- ☐ 16th Century  
☐ 17th Century

- ☐ 18th Century  
☐ 19th Century

☒ 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1900-1904

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal

- ☐ Prehistoric  
☐ Historic

☐ Agriculture

☒ Architecture

☒ Art

☐ Commerce

☐ Communications

☐ Conservation

☐ Education

☐ Engineering

☐ Industry

☐ Invention

☐ Landscape

☐ Architecture

☐ Literature

☐ Military

☐ Music

☐ Political

☐ Religion/Phi-

losophy

☐ Science

☐ Sculpture

☐ Social/Human-

itarian

☐ Theater

☐ Transportation

☐ Urban Planning

☐ Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The St. John the Baptist Catholic Church at Beloit, which was built in 1900-1904, replaced an 1878 stone structure which had been outgrown. Impetus for building a new and larger church came from Father Michael Heitz, D. D., who arrived in Beloit in June, 1898. A native of Strasbourg, Alsace-Lorraine, Father Heitz is said to have received the inspiration for the design of this building from the 12th to 15th century churches he so admired in his youth.

In June, 1899, the Beloit Gazette announced that construction of the new Catholic church would begin that fall. Joseph Marshall, a Topeka architect, was employed to prepare the plans and specifications. Marshall had practiced in Topeka since 1886 and had been an assistant state architect 1897-1898. His practice was confined mainly to churches, school and academy buildings.

Before any construction work started parishioners quarried huge amounts of stone and hauled it to the building site, where Father Heitz reportedly taught them how to dress it. Work on the foundation began in October, 1900.

Cornerstone laying ceremonies were held June 4, 1901, with a large crowd present at the all-day celebration. Bishop Cunningham of Concordia conducted the ceremonies attendant to the placing of the New Hampshire granite cornerstone. By late summer of 1902, services were being held in the building. However, the steam heating plant was not installed until December, 1903. The building was completed in 1904, but all the interior decorations were not finished until 1923.

Much of the labor was done by members of the church who were unable to contribute much financially but could donate their time. The value of donations, including labor, building materials, stained glass windows, etc., was estimated at \$15,000.

Father Heitz borrowed most of the money needed for construction (variously reported at \$20,000 to \$30,000) from well-to-do individuals, offering them a higher interest rate than the banks were paying. But at the same time it was a lower rate than he would have paid to a bank. (These loans and the additional expenses of later construction of other parish buildings had been paid for, except for \$1200, when Father Heitz retired in 1924.)

A bequest of \$2,000 was left to the church by Dr. F. M. Daily of Beloit specifically to be expended in decorating and painting the church. After a diligent search for the best artist available Father Heitz brought to Beloit from Boston in February, 1913, Gonippo Raggi,

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noted Italian artist, his brother Palamede and their assistant J. Donahue. Raggi, who had an international reputation, had studios in Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Among the major churches he had decorated were ones in Boston, Brockton, and Stockbridge, Mass., Philadelphia and Albany. The sanctuary frescoes, which depict the life of St. John the Baptist for whom the church was named, were completed in the spring of 1913. Gonippo Raggi returned in June to do the transept frescoes and came back in 1923 to complete the painting and decorating of the interior. He also brought two huge canvas paintings as a gift to the church.

The St. John the Baptist Church is a structure of exceptional architectural and artistic merit, both exterior and interior. The frescoes painted by Gonippo Raggi are an outstanding example of religious art. The existence of frescoes of such quality in a small town church is most unusual. St. John the Baptist Church, one of the most elaborately decorated churches in the state, is a fine example of late Romanesque architecture with Gothic influences.

9.

A preliminary nomination form prepared by Mrs. Duane L. Ross and Miss Louise Matheis, members of Court Beloit of the Catholic Daughters of America, contained information abstracted from letters of Msgr. Heitz and accounts of personal interviews with him.



## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Artists from Rome," Beloit Daily Call, Feb. 27, 1913.  
Beloit Gazette, June 8, 1899; Mar. 1, Oct. 11, 1900; Dec. 10, 24, 1903;  
 Jan. 14, 1904.  
 "The Corner Stone Laid," Beloit Gazette, June 6, 1901.  
 "Joseph Marshall Dies," Topeka Daily Capital, Mar. 14, 1927.  
 "The New Catholic Church," Beloit Gazette, April 26, 1900.  
Northwestern Kansas Register (Salina), May 21, 1939.  
 Schmidt, John, "Monsignor Heitz and Our Parish," The Kansas Knight  
 (Wichita), v. 18, no. 5 (May, 1940), pp. 3-5.

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		0 0 0	0 0 0	
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0		39 27 31	98 06 08	
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2 1/2 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

## 11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Richard Pankratz		
ORGANIZATION Kansas State Historical Society	DATE Jan. 7, 1975	
STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West 10th St.		
CITY OR TOWN: Topeka	STATE Kansas 66612	CODE 20

## 12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

## NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name Nyle H. Miller  
 Nyle H. Miller

Title Executive Director, Kansas State Historical Society

Date January 9, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_